

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 271537Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7226
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 09406

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG SY
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN PROPAGANDA WARFARE

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 1667, (B) STATE 77596,
(C) CAIRO 9311, (D) DAMASCUS 1683

1. AS PART OF EFFORT TO PERSUADE GOE TO TONE DOWN
MEDIA ATTACKS ON ASSAD AND SYRIA IN VIEW DELICATE SITUA-
TION IN SOUTH LEBANON, POLCOUNS MENTIONED IT OVER
WEEKEND IN LOW KEY TO DIRECTOR MFA LEGAL DEPARTMENT
ELARABY AND DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DEPART-
MENT AMRE MOUSSA, WHO ACTIVE IN GIVING GUIDANCE TO
PRESS. REACTION OF BOTH OFFICIALS INDIVIDUALLY WAS
ASTONISHMENT THAT U.S. WOULD MAKE SUCH SUGGESTION TO GOE.
THEY SAID SYRIAN MEDIA HAD BEEN MOST VITUPERATIVE OF
ALL ARABS AGAINST SADAT PEACE INITIATIVE AND ASKED IF
U.S. URGING SYRIA TO CEASE PROPAGANDA ATTACKS AGAINST
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EGYPT. IN ABSENCE OF TONING DOWN SYRIAN ATTACKS, THEY
DID NOT SEE HOW EGYPT COULD BE EXPECTED TO DO SO. BOTH
OFFICIALS, ONLY HALF JOKINGLY, CLAIMED U.S. DEMONSTRATING
ITS SPECIAL "LOVE AFFAIR" WITH ASSAD. MOUSSA ASKED
SARCASTICALLY WHAT WORLD'S GREATEST DEMOCRACY FOUND SO
ENTICING ABOUT BAATH PARTY.

2. COMMENT: EGYPTIANS DO NOT BELIEVE ASSAD'S BEHAVIOR VIS-A-VIS SOUTH LEBANON HAS BEEN EITHER "COOPERATIVE" OR "RESPONSIBLE". ON CONTRARY, THEY SEE ASSAD AS SCARED TO DEATH ISRAELIS WILL STRIKE SYRIAN FORCES AND CHAGRINED THAT SYRIA'S BRAVADO AND PRETENTIONS TO LEADERSHIP OF ARABS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO ENTIRE WORLD. IF WE WISH TO BE PERSUASIVE WITH GOE ON THIS ISSUE, IT WILL BE NECESSARY (A) TO CONVINCE SYRIA TO TONE DOWN ATTACKS ON SADAT; (B) PUT MATTER TO GOE IN STRICT REAL POLITIK TERMS OF HOW EXPANSION OF LEBANESE FIGHTING TO ENGULF SYRIAN FORCES COULD LEAD TO AREA CONFLAGRATION THAT WOULD WRECK PEACE PROCESS; AND (C) AVOID TALK OF "COOPERATIVE" AND "RESPONSIBLE" SYRIAN BEHAVIOR, WHICH IS NOT HOW EGYPTIANS PERCEIVE SYRIAN ROLE.

3. WITH EXCEPTION SADAT'S OCTOBER INTERVIEW (GIVEN MARCH 22) AND BITING ATTACK BY SYRIAN-BAITER AHMAD ZAYN IN SUNDAY'S AKHBAR, WHICH CALLS ASSAD "THE MAN WITH THE BIG MOUTH", PRESS LAST TWO DAYS HAS NOT ATTACKED SYRIA. EILTS

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